



# Quicklet on The Best Rihanna Songs: Lyrics and Analysis

*Ellen Jones*

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### ABOUT THE BOOK

When 16 year old Robyn Rihanna Fenty first moved to the United States to pursue a career in music, there was no indication that she would become anything other than another flash-in-the-pan, sub-Beyonce pop starlet.

Born and raised in a working class area of Saint Michael parish in south-west Barbados, Rihanna was the eldest daughter of Monica Braithwaite and Ronald Fenty. Her father struggled with addictions to crack cocaine and alcohol, leading to her parents' divorce when Rihanna was 14, after which she maintained contact with her father, but continued living with her mother and two younger brothers, Rorrey and Rajad. Like many teenage girls, she formed a singing group with friends and dreamt of becoming a pop star.

However, unlike many teenage girls, Rihanna also benefitted from good connections. When she discovered two US record executives were holidaying on her home island, an audition for her group was arranged by mutual friends. History has forgotten the other two members of Rihanna's singing group, but in Miss Fenty, record execs Carl Sturken and Eric Rogers saw something marketable. Jay Z did too. He signed her to Def Jam during his brief tenure as president allowing for the release of two albums of reggae-tinged R&B that would make her name.

The caribbean influences in Rihanna's early releases made her a refreshing novelty for R&B fans, but if that was all she had to offer, no doubt by now "Rihanna" would be just another footnote in pop history, alongside Ashanti, Amerie, or Christina Milian (remember them?). But Rihanna had something else. Perhaps inspired by her oft-cited idol Madonna, she has demonstrated an ability to shapeshift in a way that is always uncannily ahead of the trend.

### EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK

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In 2009, an ugly and unfairly public domestic violence case created a rupture in Rihanna's pop princess public image, but she was already a changed woman. In 2008 she marked the release of darker material by cutting and dying her hair, against the advice of her record company. Since then she's earned a reputation for fearless fashion choices in general and, in particular...

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